PORTFOLIO

OF

ILLUSTRATIONS OF SIND TILES

COUSENS

00138918

738.6
Cou/Por
138918

Digitized with financial assistance from
Observer Research Foundation
on 17 May, 2019

PORTFOLIO

OF

ILLUSTRATIONS OF SIND TILES.

Prepared by

HENRY COUSENS, M.R.A.S.,

Superintendent, Archæological Survey of India, Western Circle.

O
738·6
Cou/Por
138918

ISSUED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

1906.

Photo-Chromo-Lithographed by

W. GRIGGS & SONS (1906) LIMITED,

Chromo-Lithographers to the King.

00138918

SIND TILES.

How thoroughly the Arabs wiped out all structural evidences of Hinduism in Sind, and with what zeal the ardent followers of the Prophet of Islam enforced their iconoclastic practices, is shown by the almost complete absence, at the present day, of any Hindu shrine in the Province. And so engaged were they with their own petty jealousies and feuds, that they have, themselves, left us nothing in the way of architecture worthy of the name. The great heavy massive buildings, which they erected, cannot be said to be conspicuous for either gracefulness of design or artistic merit, and they are only saved from mediocrity by their decorated surfaces. The coloured enamelled tiles, which were, and still are, so lavishly used, are the chief characteristic feature of nearly all Muhammadan buildings in Sind; they were also much used in the Punjab, and at stray places elsewhere, whither the art was carried from this corner of India. Similar tile-work is found as far afield as Bidar in the Hyderabad territory, where the whole front of the great *madressa* was lavishly decorated with it. The illustrations in this portfolio, however, are confined to the tile-work of Sind.

The main object of the publication of these plates is rather utilitarian than archæological. It is intended to serve the practical end of making the work better known, and thus to create a demand for it, at the same time supplying the makers with designs from the older and better work upon buildings scattered about the Province, which they are too poor to go in search of themselves. These tiles may be put to many uses as decorative aids in modern buildings, and more especially in the better class of brick structures. A careful study of the plates will suggest endless ways in which they may be adapted. They would greatly enhance any scheme of decoration, whether as string courses or as judiciously arranged details upon the exterior; and as dadoes, bands, or panels upon the interior walls and ceilings. As flooring tiles, where booted feet pass over them, they are not successful, as the glaze is not hard enough to withstand such wear.

Coloured tile-work seems to have been imported into India from Persia, and to have been introduced by the Muhammadans, who almost exclusively used it in their buildings. But there seems to be no account of its introduction nor of the time when it crossed the border. The earliest examples in Sind do not, probably, date back beyond the end of the fifteenth century. A local tradition in the Punjab ascribes its introduction to Chinese workmen,[1] but this need hardly be taken seriously. A similar story seems to have been current in Sind, for we read in an article on Bombay Pottery, in the second volume of the *Journal of Indian Art*, that the potters of Hala, the chief place of tile manufacture in Sind, are called Kashigars, and "claim their descent from some prehistoric Chinaman who was induced to settle in Sind by one of the Amirs. It is said that the Amir had to pay a very large sum and rich presents to the first settler and that the present generation of potters is directly or indirectly descended from him. The features, the stature, and the general appearance of the race, however, bear no trace of Chinese blood, and the workmanship has more the character of the Persian than the Chinese ceramic ware." But these traditions probably came with the tiles from Persia where in certain localities there are still said to be legends of the introduction of the art into that country from China. Certain it is that the ancient Persian tile-work had its origin in Babylonia, but there is very great uncertainty about the manner of its resuscitation in mediæval times, after centuries of interruption. For those who wish to pursue this subject further such works as *Leadless Decorative Tiles: Faience and Mosaic*, by W. J. Furnival, and *Denkmäler Persischer Baukunst*, by Friedrich Sarre, may be perused with profit.

In India, tile-work has been used mostly upon the mosques and tombs of the Muhammadans, where it has been most lavishly spread over the walls both within and without, as dadoes, panels, string courses, arch rings, and the paving of floors. There are three distinct varieties of the work in respect to its artistic treatment. In Sind we find the designs confined most strictly to geometric forms and foliage. In Northern India and Kasmir human and animal forms have been introduced, and in this respect the work follows more closely the mediæval work found in Persia. This latter may be again divided into two varieties, namely, that in which the patterns, in various colours, are traced over the tiles irrespective of the shape of the tiles, which, as in Sind, are usually square, and that in which the tiles take the shapes of the flowers, buds, and stems in the ornament—a pure mosaic. There is yet another difference, this time in the body of the tile. In Sind and at Multan it is a hard-baked red terra-cotta, whereas the later Punjab tile, as represented upon the mosque of Wazir Khan and the fort at Lahore, is of an altogether different make, being made up of a composition of silicious sand with lime and other ingredients, held together with some cementing material. In Sind the tiles are applied flat to the building, their surfaces being on the same level, but at Multan, variety has been introduced by raising the main parts of the pattern half an inch above the ground-work. It is doubtful whether this is a legitimate manner of applying them, as the edges of the tiles, so raised, are not enamelled, and show rough surfaces.

The earliest examples of tile-work in Sind, such as are seen in the old Dabgir mosque (cir. 1509) and Mirza Jani Beg's tombs (cir. 1599) at Tatta, are confined to two colours—a deep rich blue and a pale turquoise blue, on a white ground. Green, brown, orange, and purple were introduced at a later date, and are found in abundance upon the Talpur tombs (1783—1843). Asaf Khan's tomb at Shahdera, near Lahore, which is a good example of this kind of work, was erected about 1650, and shows that these additional colours were introduced into the Punjab earlier than in Sind, if the tile decoration upon the tomb is coeval with the building of the tomb itself.

The Multan tile-work is very much upon a level with that of Sind, the latter being, perhaps, the better on the whole. The favourite colours there are the two shades of blue and white. The rich browns and yellows, in which the Sind potters revel, are sparingly used, and when they are, they are not so clear and bright. On the other hand the Sindhis do not produce such bright clear blues as the Punjabis. The Multan tile-work, as now turned out, is decidedly inferior,

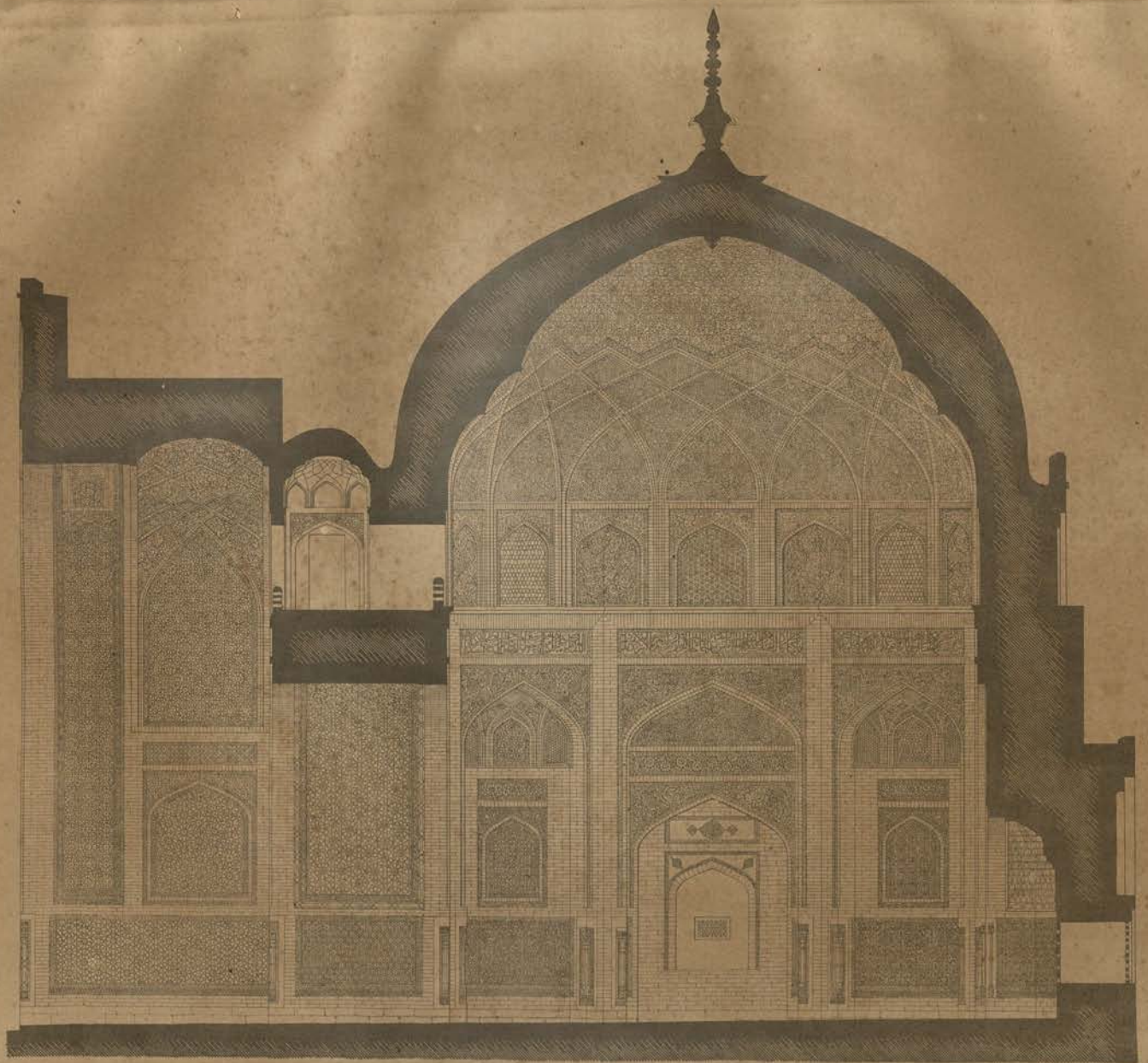
[1] *Journal of Indian Art*, Vol. II, p. 17.

both in design and combination of colours, to that of Sind. The work upon the recently built Idgah at the former place compares unfavourably with that upon the tomb of Shah Kairu'd-din in old Sukkur, built but a few years ago. The Multan work is coarse and crude, the patterns being larger and coarser in outline and design.

At present there are but few families in Sind who continue to manufacture these tiles, to which they have added ornamental pottery. They live at Hala, thirty miles north, and at Narsapur, eighteen miles to the north-east of Hyderabad. The art is languishing, and if it is to be rescued from a natural death more active interest must be taken in it by the local authorities. This publication, when put into the hands of the potters, will help very materially, but further official help will be necessary to keep the industry going, both by local concessions to the workers and by making the work better known amongst the Public Works Department officials and others entrusted with the work of the erection of public buildings. The tiles are still used in native buildings, but to a very limited extent, gaudiness and cheap work being sought after and provided. The hand of the potter is losing its cunning, and he is forgetting the secrets of his trade. In the earlier work there was a considerable amount of good taste displayed in the colours and the grouping of patterns, but now gaudy show is all that is aimed at, good taste in any particular work being more the result of accident than intent. In all proposed application of the work the price, of course, is an important item. This varies from four annas per square foot, for plain single colours, to one rupee and four annas per square foot for complicated designs and fancy-shaped tiles. Then there is the cost of transit, by camel, from Hala to the nearest railway station, Shahdapur, some fourteen miles.

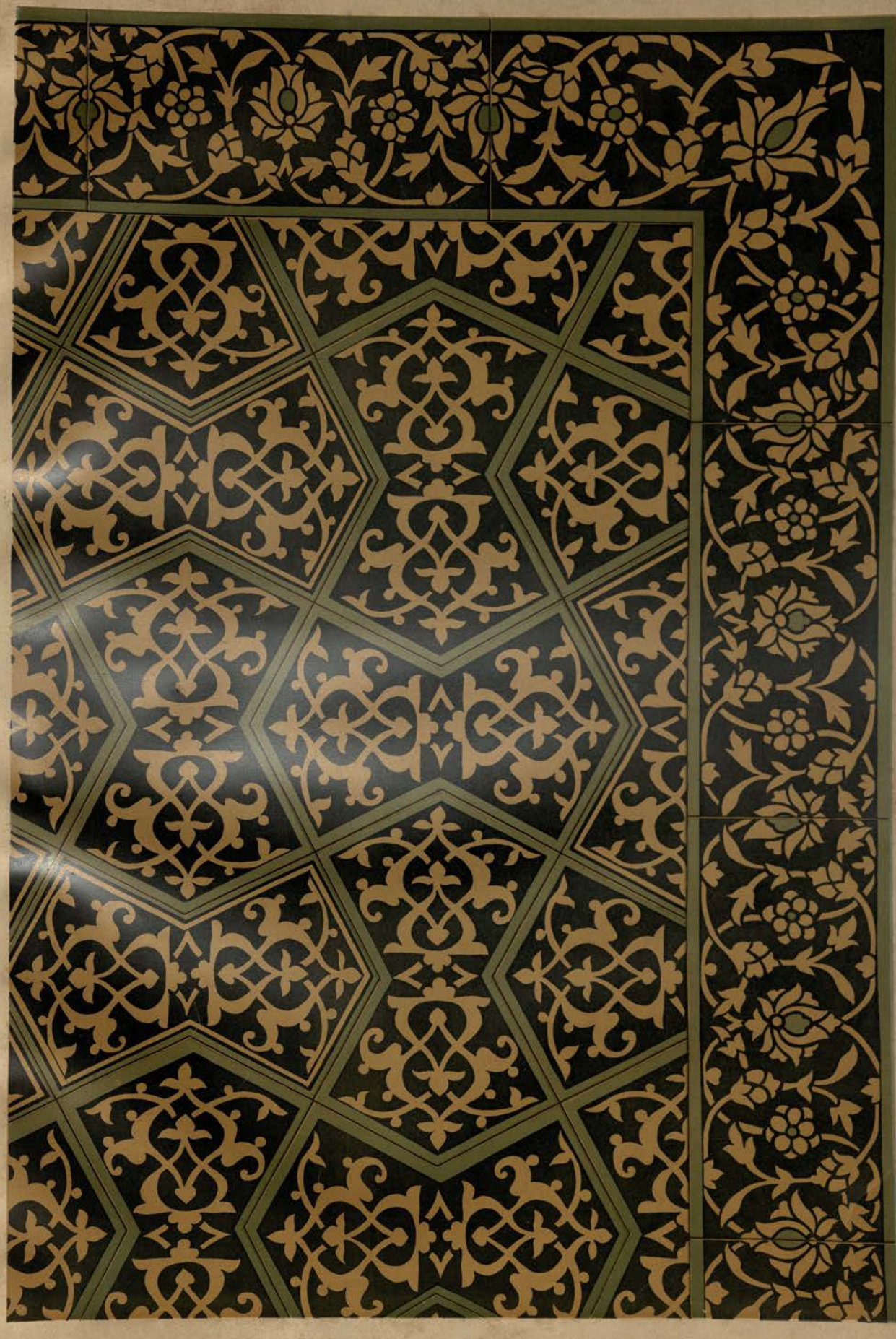
The dates of the various buildings from which specimens are illustrated, are as follows, as far as at present known. Some of the older tombs on the Makli Hill, at Tatta, decorated with tile-work, date between A.D. 1550 and A.D. 1600, and this work is represented by the two upper designs on plate 18, the first design on plate 19 (first design refers to that marked A), the four upon plate 23, and the third upon plate 24. Mirza Jani Beg's tomb is dated A.D. 1599—1600, and in it is one of the finest dadoes in Sind. Plate 13 shows a portion of this. There is a waxy translucency about these tiles ; and a very fault in the firing—the slight running of the colours—has enhanced the appearance by its softening effect. Plate 12 shows a portion of the front of the building where enamelled-faced bricks have been used with pleasing effect, alternating with the plain terra-cotta surfaces. The white lines are only imitation joints of white enamel, along the sunk edges of the bricks, the real joints being almost too fine to admit the thickness of a sheet of note paper. The Jami Masjid at Tatta, built between A.D. 1644 and 1647, is the finest example of old tile decoration left in Sind. Plates 1-11, 14, and 16 give specimens from its walls. The next dated building, from which we have a specimen is the Jami Masjid at Khudabad, near Dadu, built in A.D. 1710. Plate 28 contains about the finest panel in Sind, that of a tall lily stalk, or tuberose, bearing leaves and flowers. The balance of the design is well kept though both sides are different. This, with another, adorned the sides of the main entrance to the mosque, but the other is badly damaged. There is hardly a tile in this building that has not been damaged by people trying to hook them out by the corners, but with little success, the cementing material being often stronger than the tile. The Kalhora tombs, at Hyderabad, come next in point of age, samples being given on plates 33 and 34 from Nabi Khan's tomb (cir. A.D. 1780). In continuation of these come the Talpur tombs (A.D. 1783—1843), in which the additional colours such as green, brown, and yellow, are used. Plates 29 to 32 show a different style of work, but, unfortunately, there is neither inscription nor tradition to give us any idea of its age. The plain surface of the terra-cotta brick-work is largely introduced as part of the decoration, and with considerable success. Apart from dadoes, which require the tiles *en masse*, this is rather the line in which coloured tiles might be used to the best advantage in modern buildings. The fourth example, on plate 18, shows very late coarse work, and plate 43 gives a good example of modern work.

H. C.



1. **Tatta**: Section of the Jami Masjid, shewing enamelled tile work on the walls.

SCALE 3-16ths



2. Tatta: Portion of a coloured tile panel from the Jami Masjid.

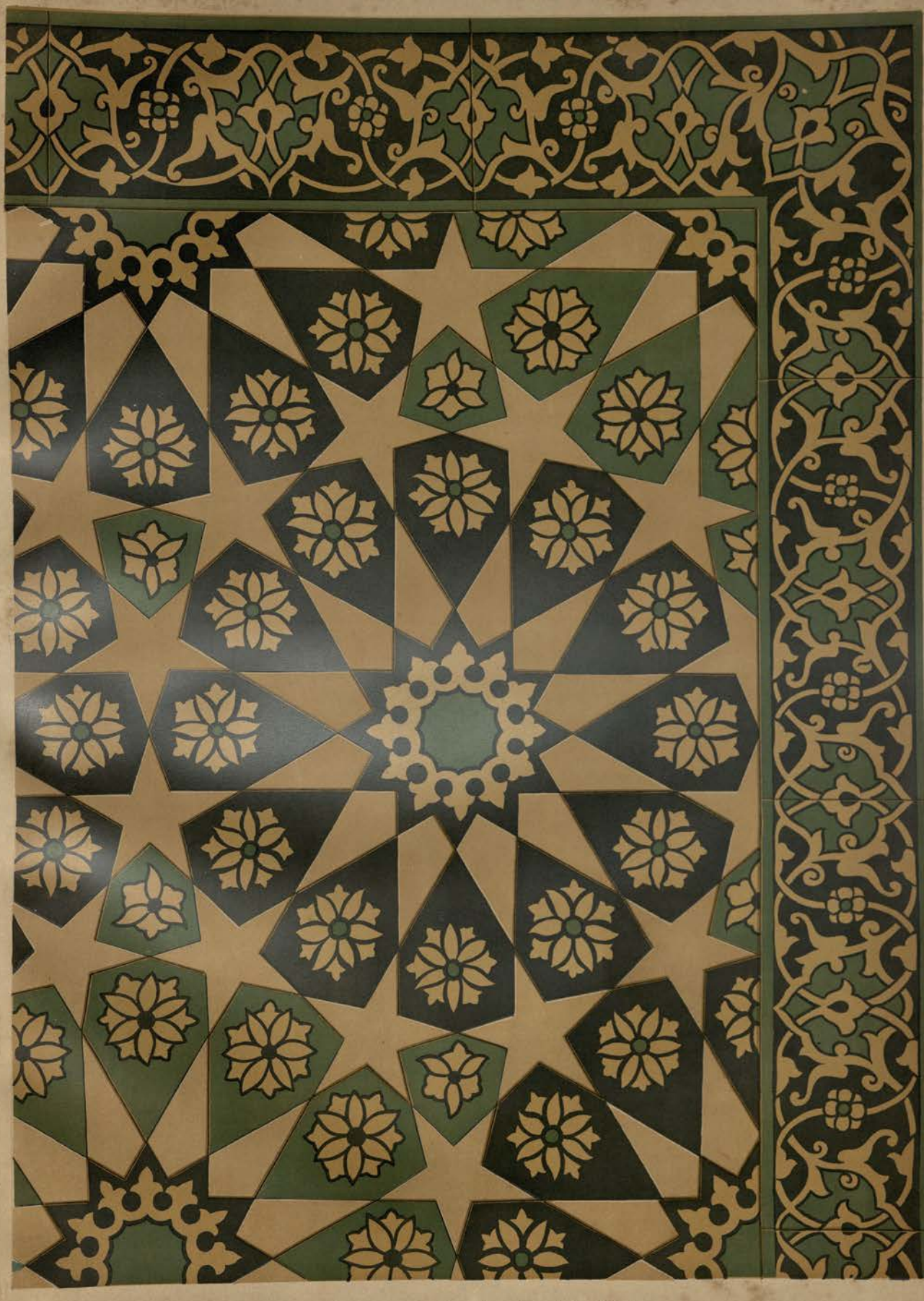
SCALE: 3-4

3. Tatta : Portion of a coloured tile dado from the Jami Masjid

SCALE : 2-4

4. Tatta: Portion of a coloured tile panel from the Jami Masjid.

SCALE: 3-4.

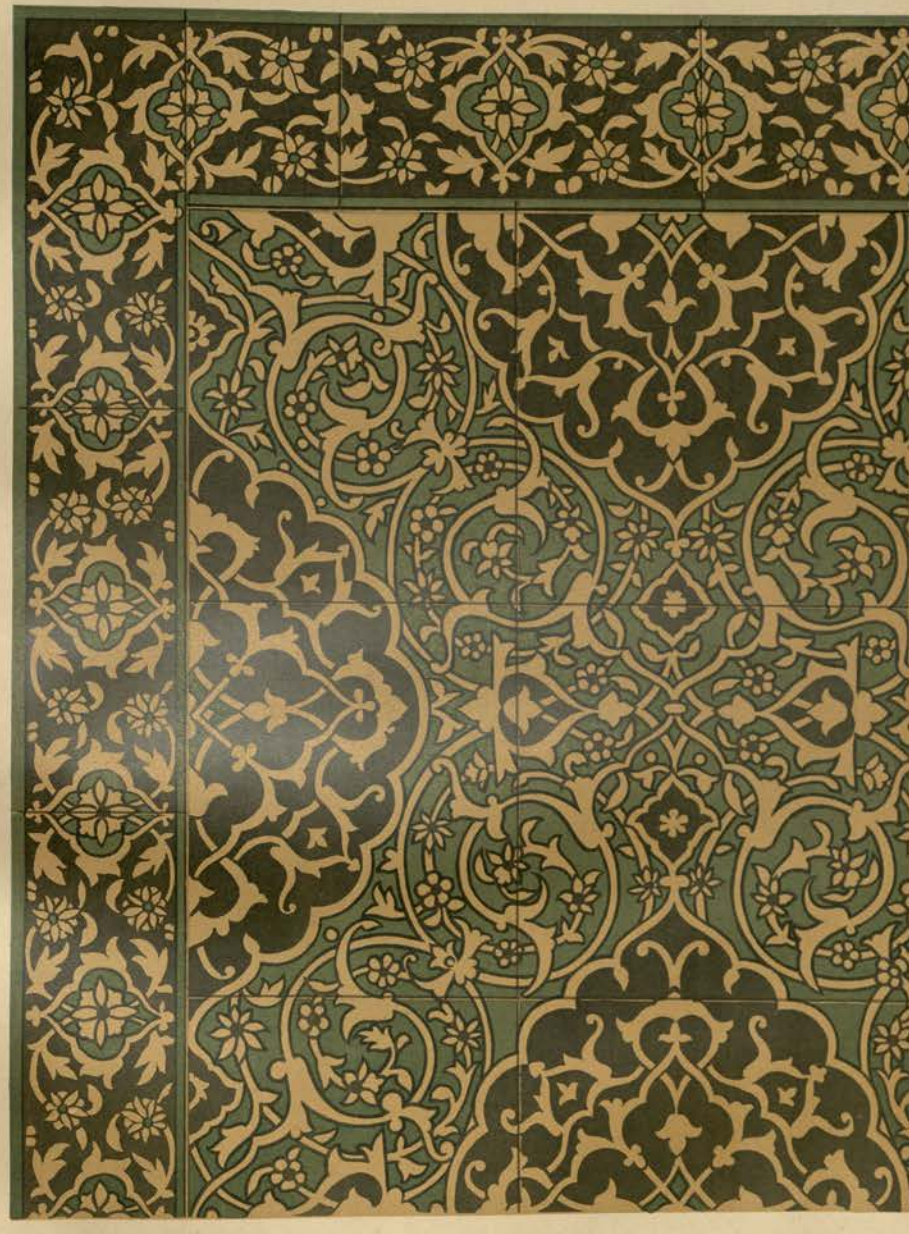


3. **Tatta**: Portion of a coloured tile panel from the Jami Masjid.

SCALE: 3-4

6. **Tatta**: Portion of a coloured tile panel from the Jami Masjid.

SCALE: 3-4



7. **Tatta**: Portion of a coloured tile dado from the Jami Masjid.

SCALE: 1-2.

8. **Tatta**: Coloured tile panelling from the Jami Masjid.

SCALE: 3-4.

9. **Tatta**: Portion of a coloured tile panel from the Jami Masjid.

SCALE 3-4

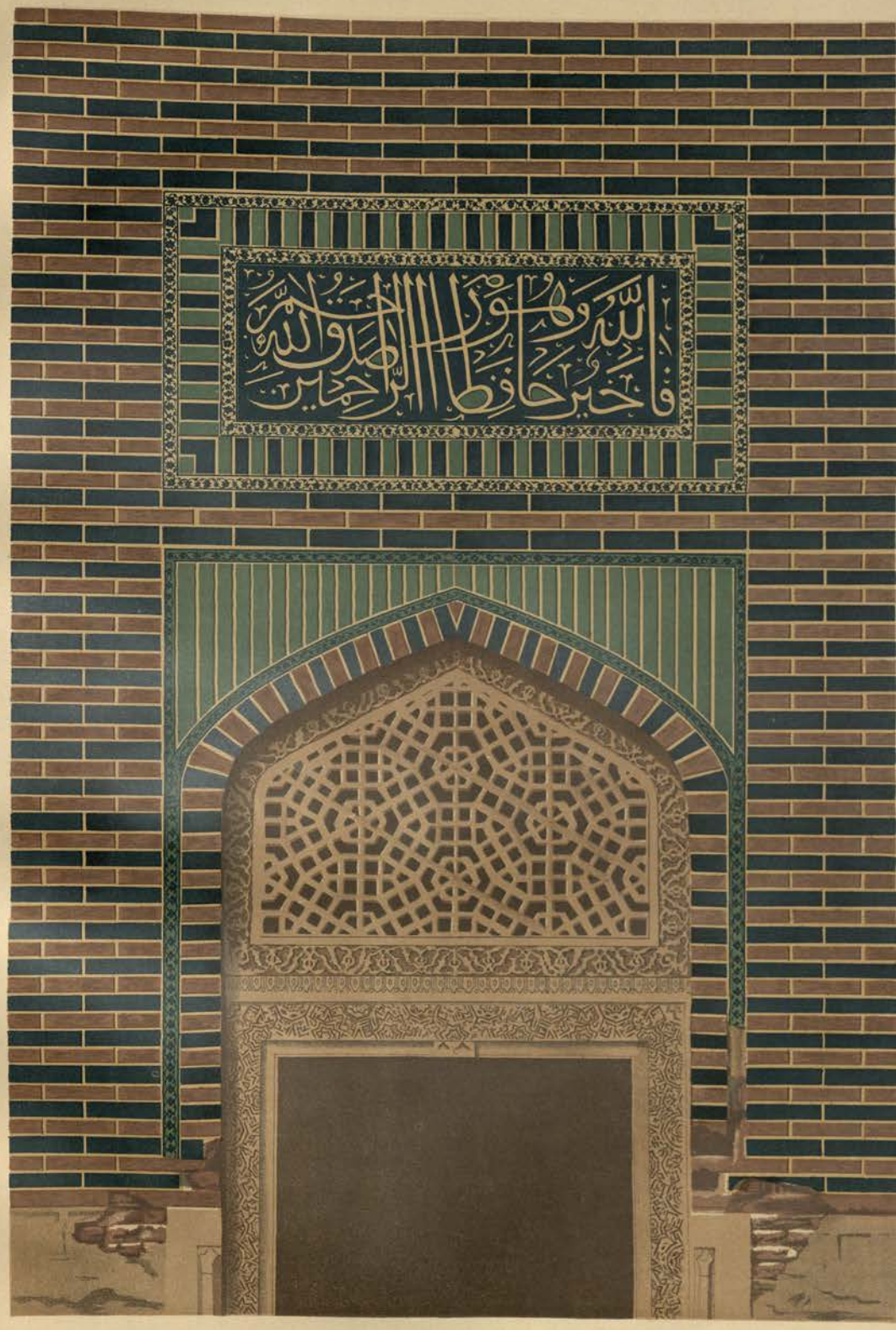
SCALE : 1-4.

SCALE : 3-4.

10. **Tatta** : Coloured tile panel and string-course from the Jami Masjid.

11. **Tatta**: Portion of a coloured tile dado from the Jami Masjid.

SCALE: 3-4

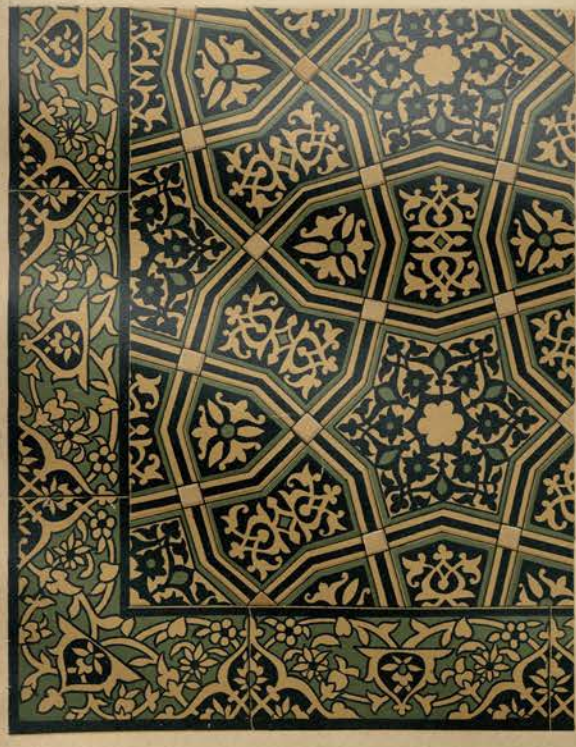


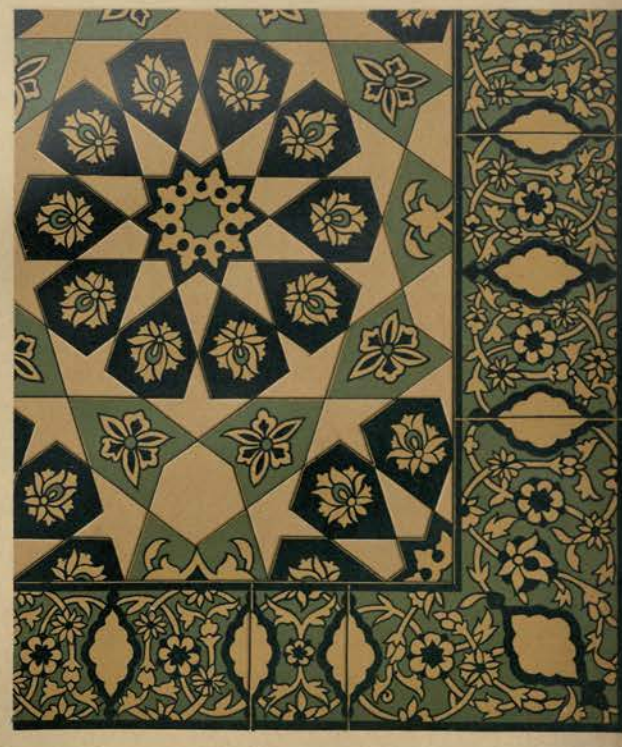
12. **Tatta**: Elevation of part of entrance of Mirza Jani Beg's Tomb.

SCALE: 1-10.

14. **Tatta**: Portion of a coloured tile dado from the Jami Masjid.

SCALE: 3-4

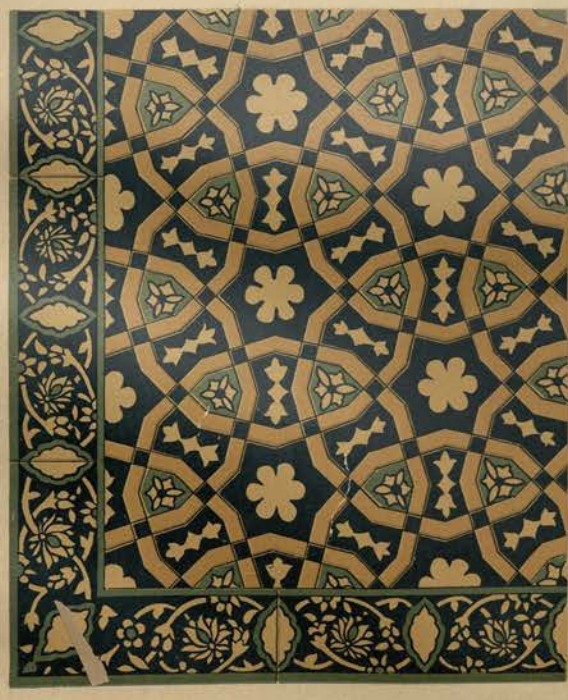


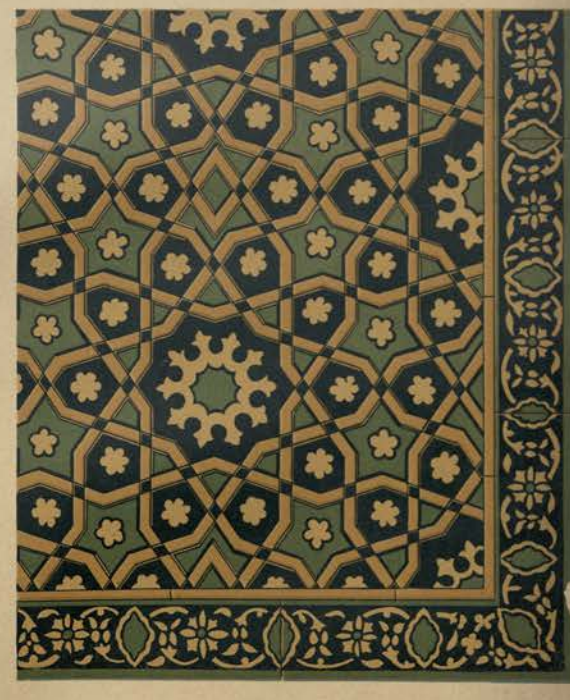


15. **Tatta**: Coloured tile work.

SCALE: 3-8.

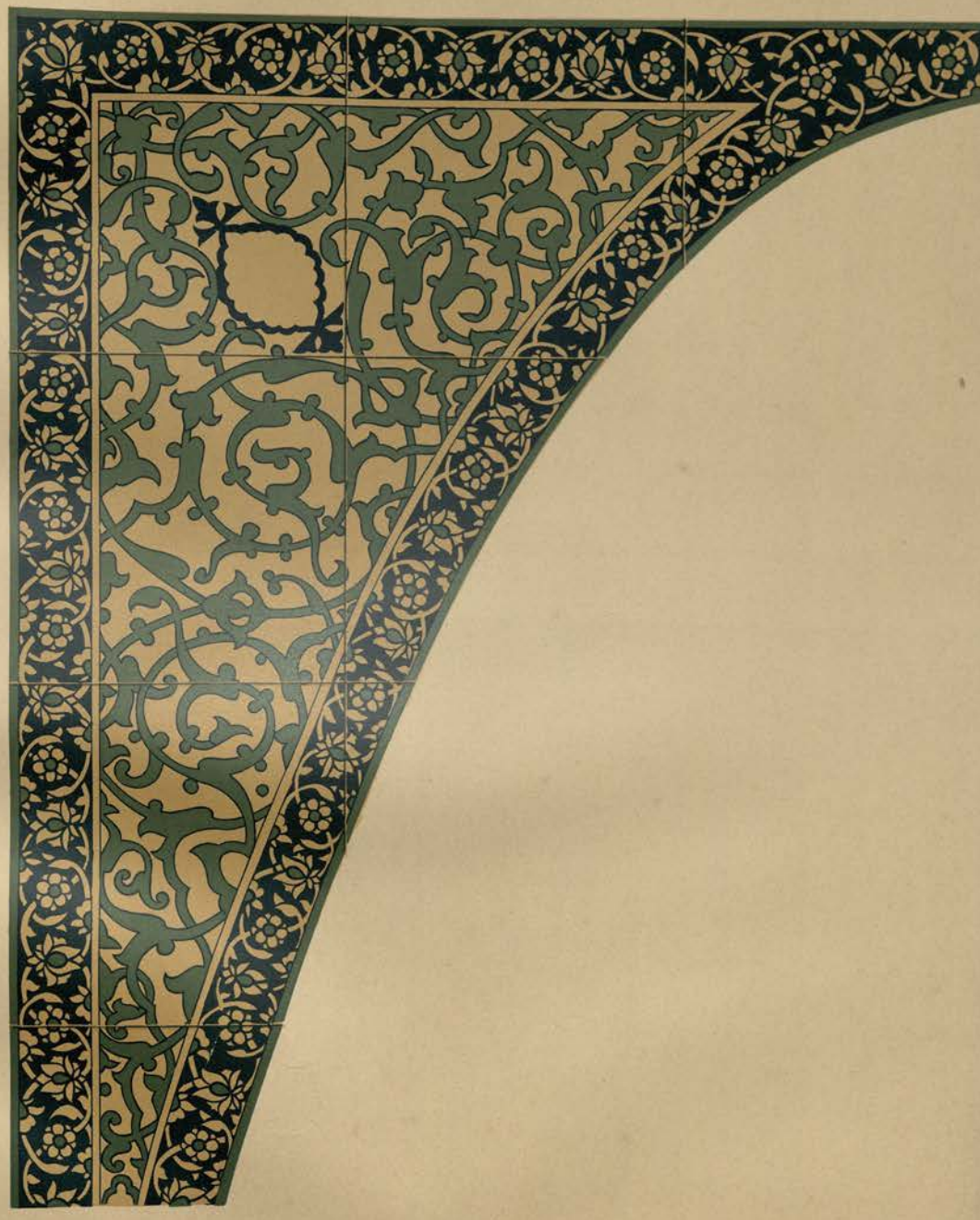
From Mirza Jani Beg's Tomb.





16. **Tatta**: Coloured tile work from the Jami Masjid.

SCALE: 3-8

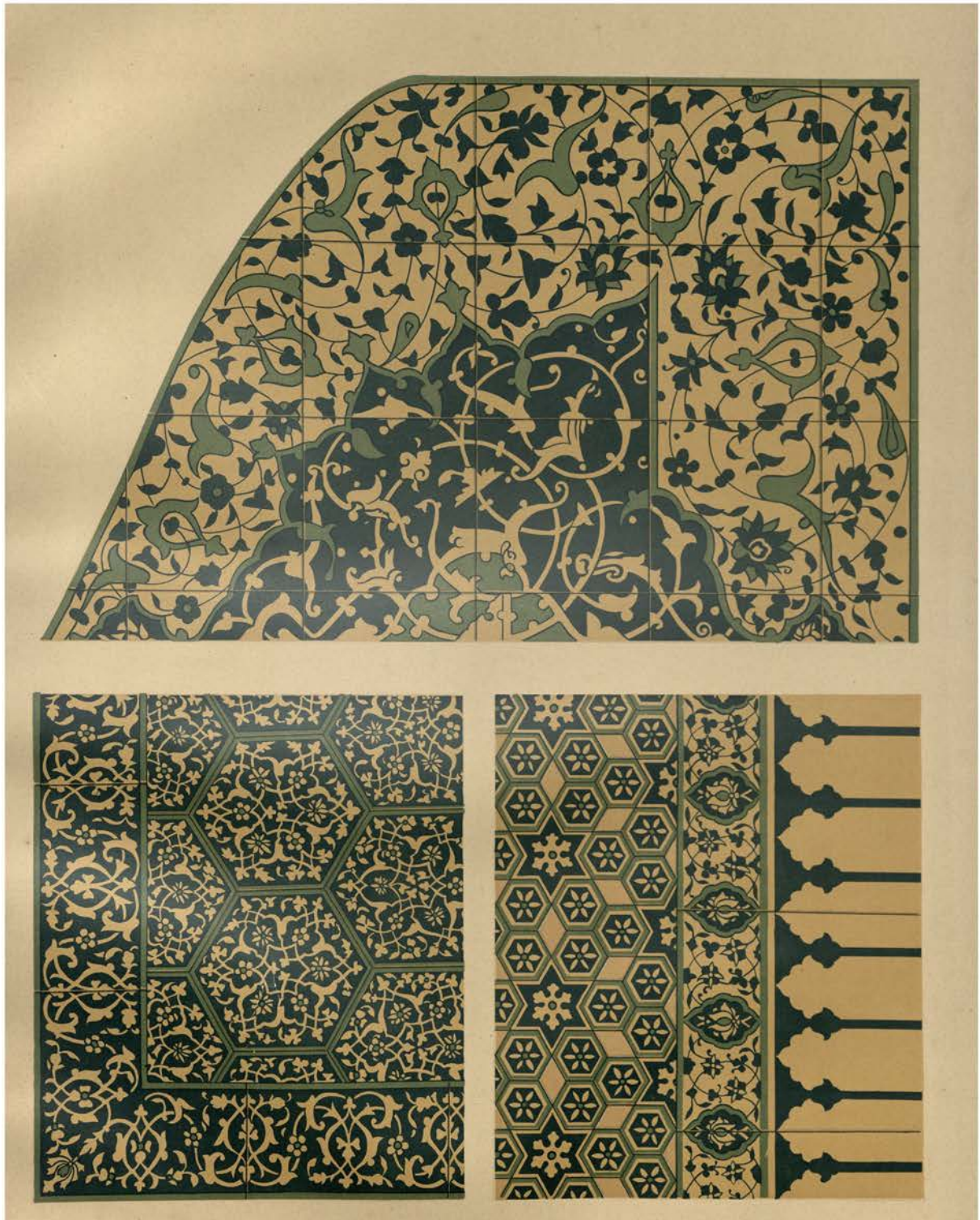


17. **Tatta**: Coloured tile work from Mirza Jani Beg's Tomb.

SCALE: 3-8.

18. Tatta : Coloured tile work.

SCALE: 1-3.

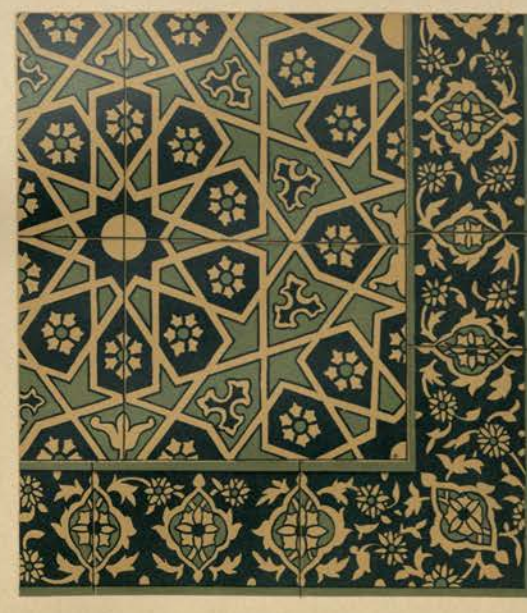


19. **Tatta**: Coloured tile work from tombs on the Makli Hill.

SCALE: 3-8

20 **Tatta**: Coloured tile work from the tomb of Mirza Jani Beg.

SCALE: 3-8



21. **Tatta**: Coloured tile work.

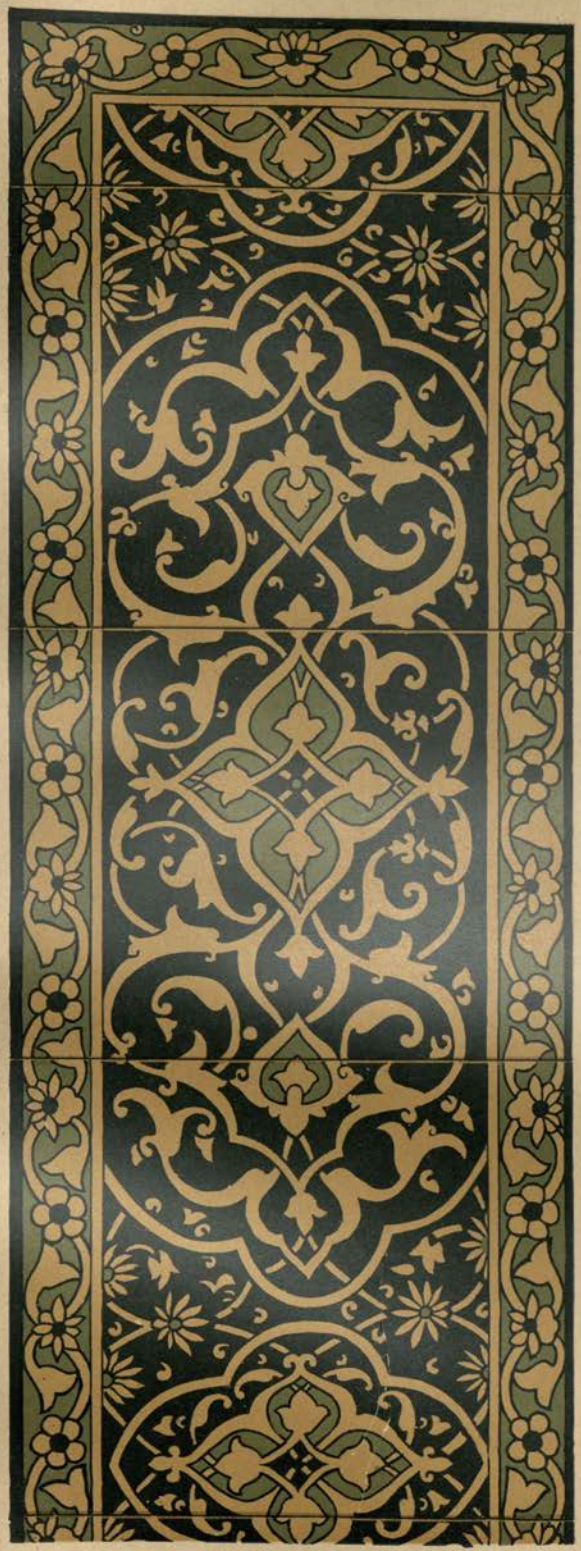
SCALE: 1-9.

22. Tatta: Coloured tile work from tombs on the Makli Hill.

SCALE: 3-4.

23. Tatta: Coloured tile work from tombs on the Makli Hill.

SCALE: 3-8.

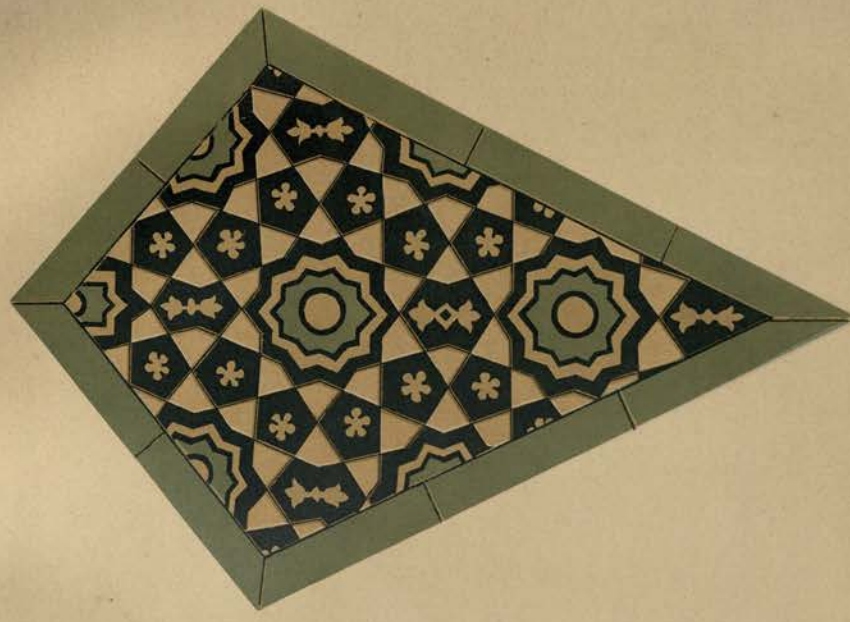


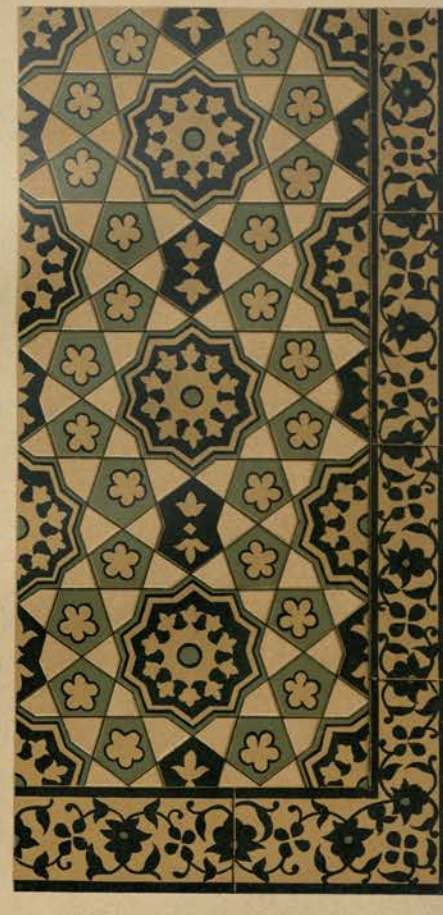
24. Tatta : Coloured tile work.

SCALE : 3-8

25. **Tatta**: Coloured tile panel on a ruined building on the Makli Hill.

SCALE: 2-8.

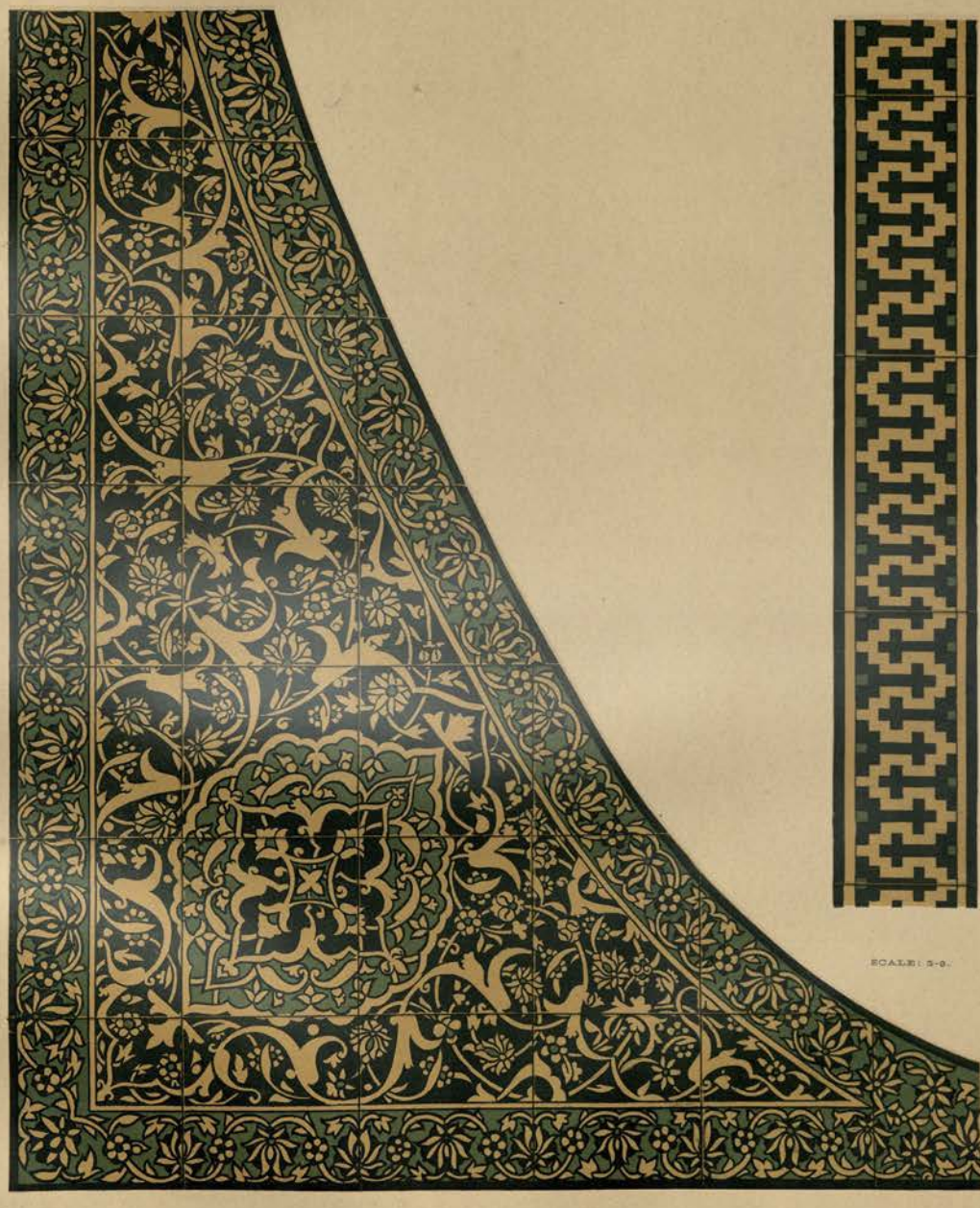




26. **Tatta** : Coloured tile work.

SCALE : 3-8

138918



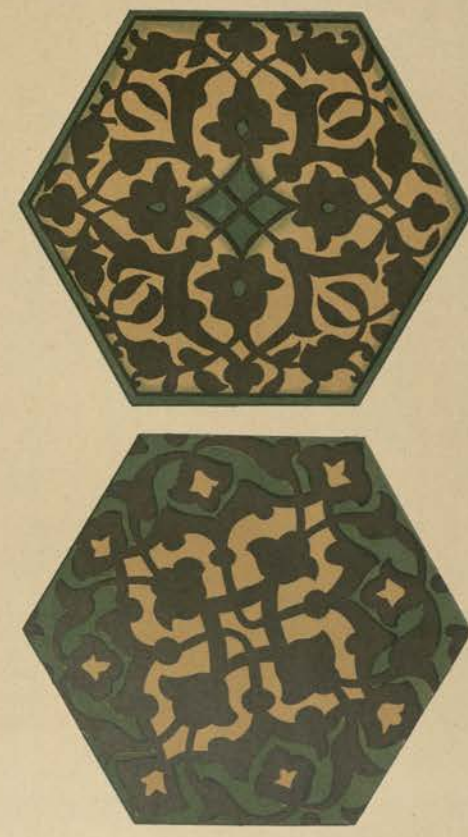
SCALE: 3-8.

27. **Tatta**: Coloured tile work from tombs on the Makli Hill.

SCALE : 1-2.

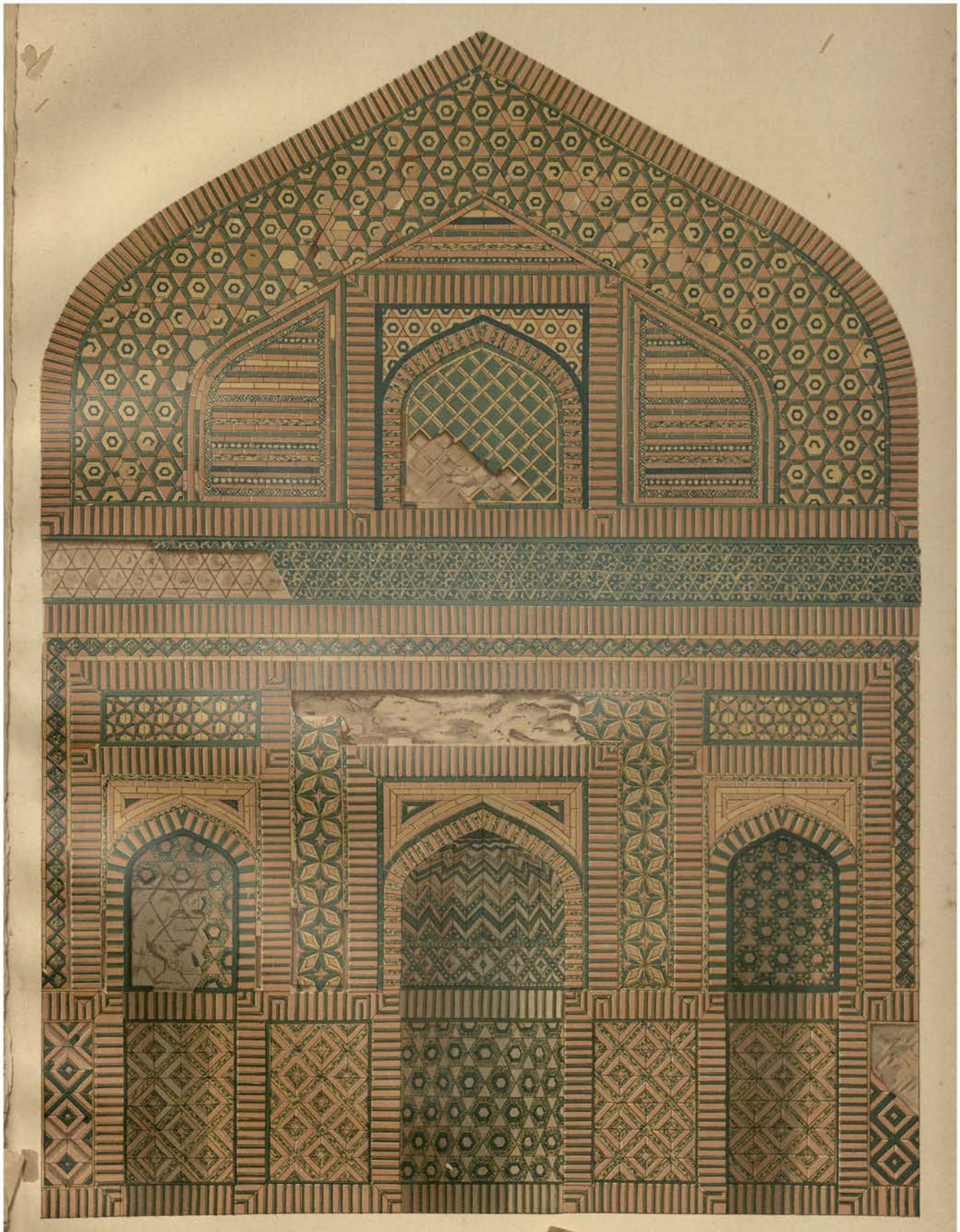
28. **Khudabad**: A coloured tile panel from the Jami Masjid.

SCALE: 3-8.



Tatta: Coloured tiles.

SCALE: 3-4



30. **Sukkur**: Coloured tile decoration on back wall of ruined mosq[illegible]mb of M. Abul Baki Purani.

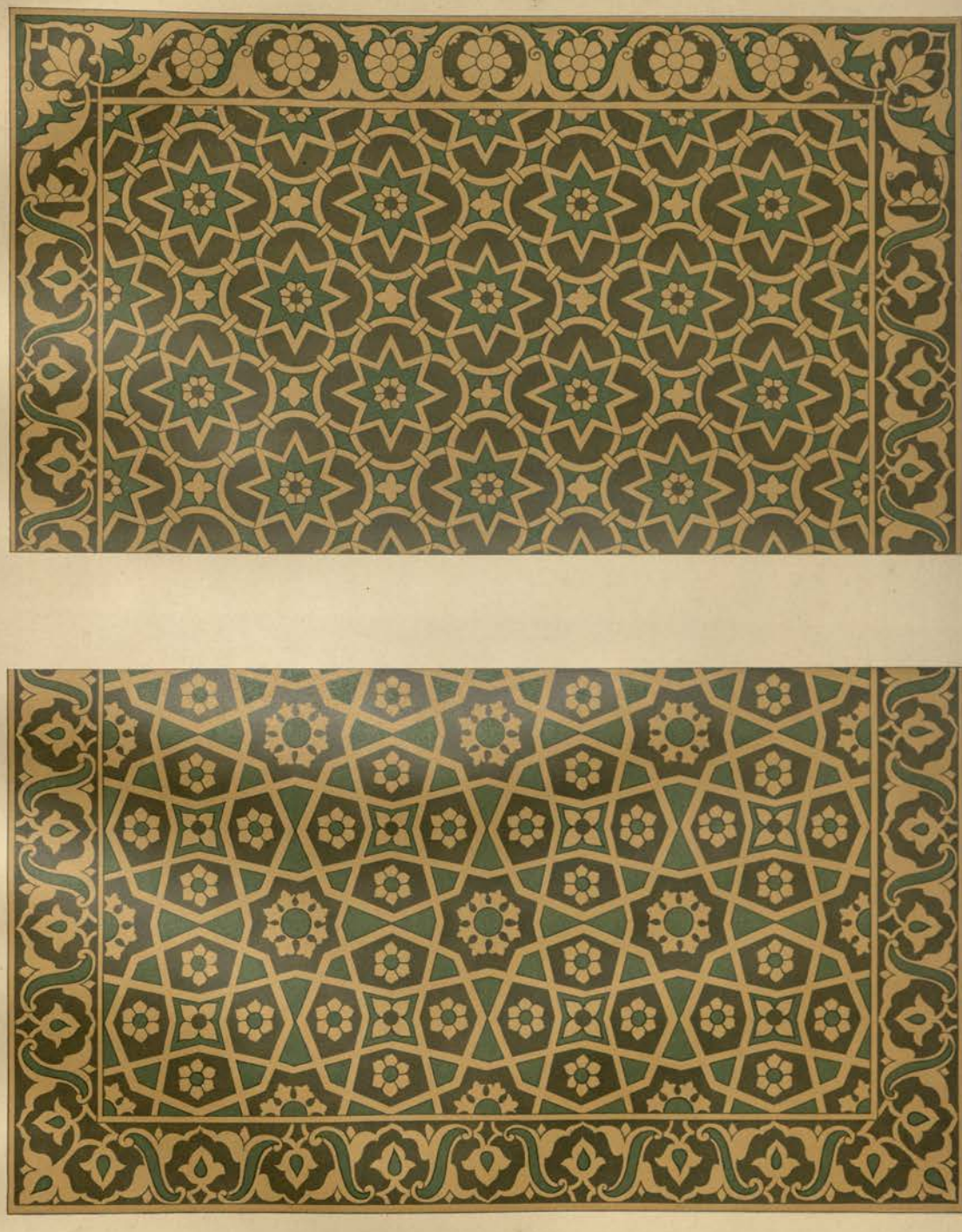
SCALE: 1-16.

31. **Sukkur**: Dome in enamelled tiles in ruined mosque beside tomb of M. Abul Baki Purani.

SCALE: 3-20.

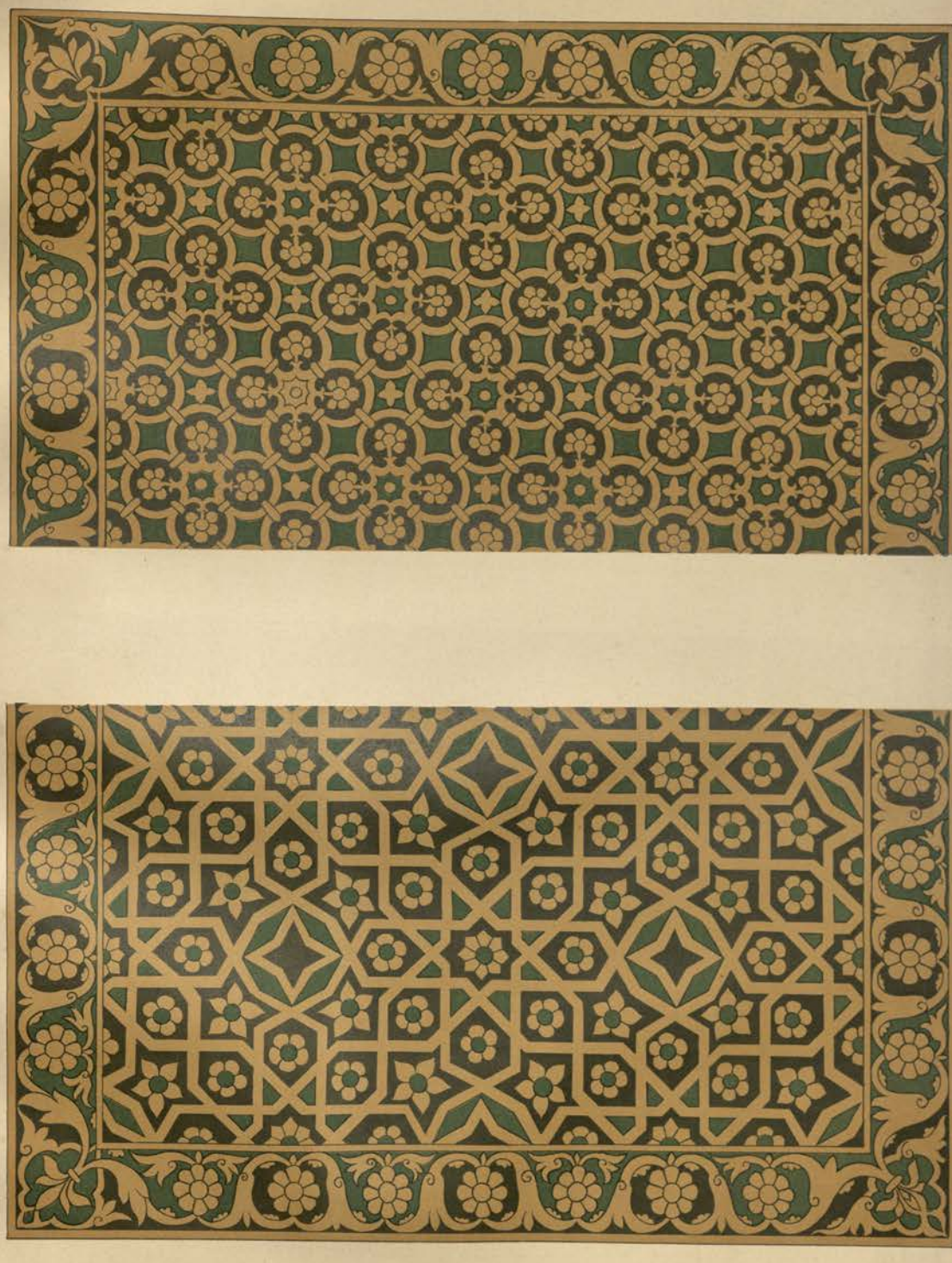
32. **Sukkur**: Coloured tile work from an old ruined tomb.

SCALE: 3-20



33. **Hyderabad**: Coloured tile dados from Ghulam Nabi Khan's Tomb.

SCALE: 1-2.

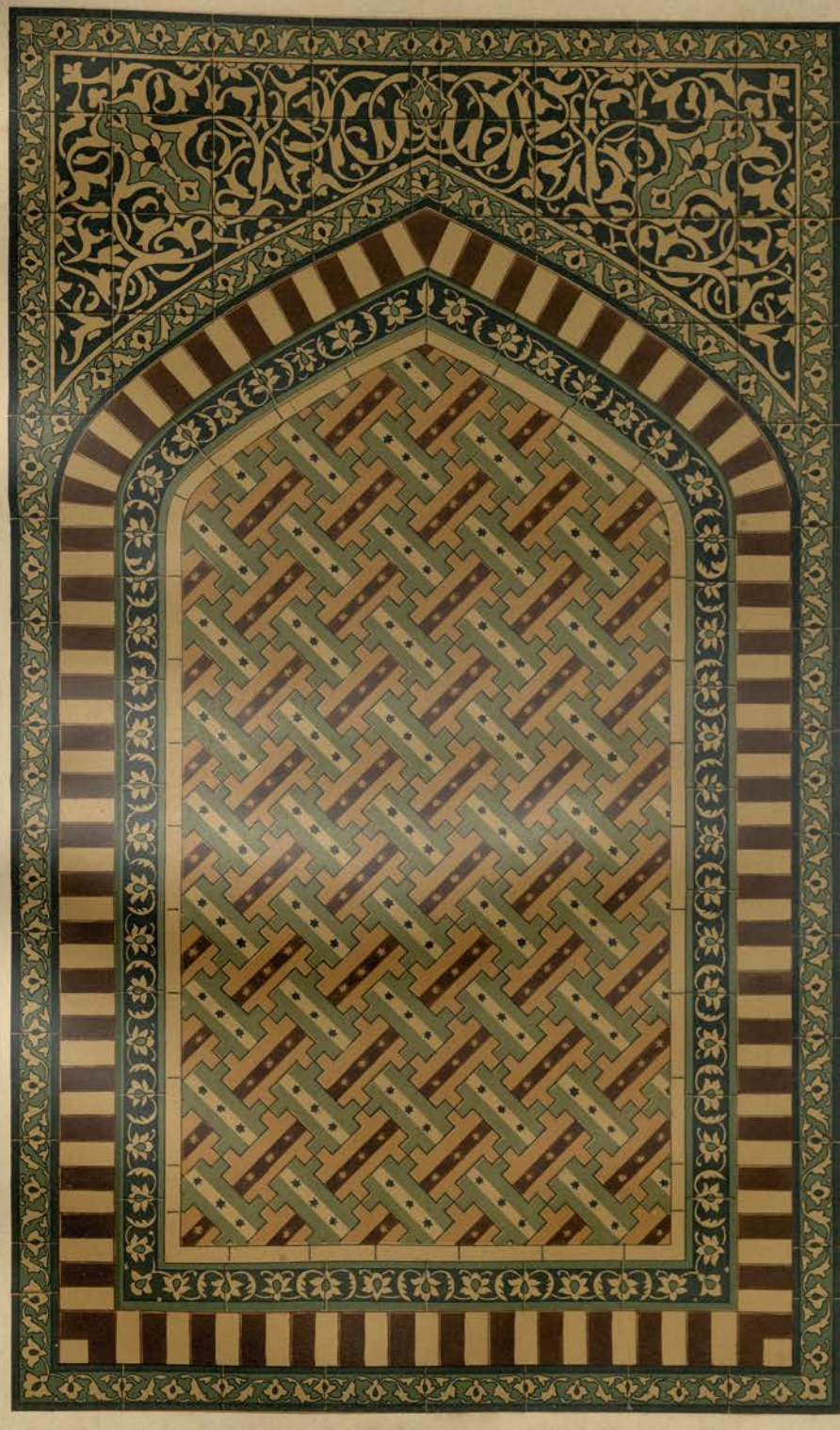


34. **Hyderabad:** Coloured tile dados from Ghulam Nabi Khan's Tomb.

SCALE: 1-2.

35. **Hyderabad**: Coloured tile panel from the Talpur Tombs.

SCALE: 3-16.



36. **Hyderabad**: Coloured tile panel from the Talpur Tombs.

SCALE: 3-16.

37. **Hyderabad**: Coloured tile bands from the Talpur Tombs.

SCALE: 1-4

38. **Hyderabad**: Coloured tile band from the Talpur Tombs.

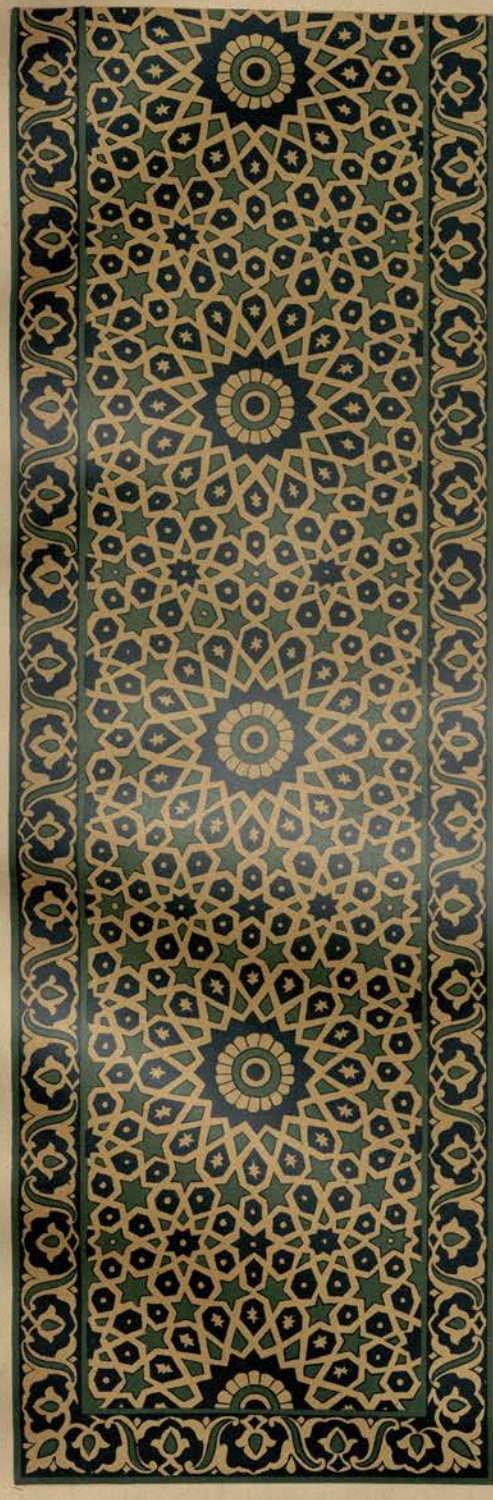
SCALE 1-4

39. **Hyderabad:** Coloured tile panel from the Talpur Tombs.

SCALE: 3-16.

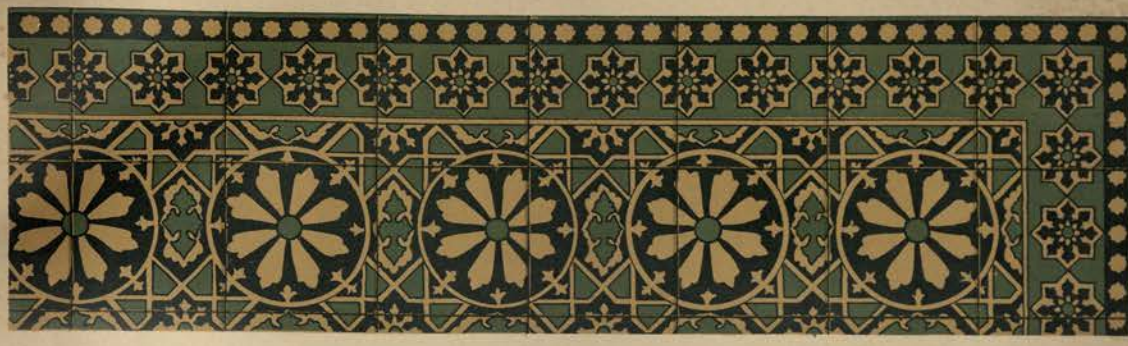
40. **Hyderabad**: Portions of coloured tile bands from the Talpur Tombs.

SCALE: 1-4



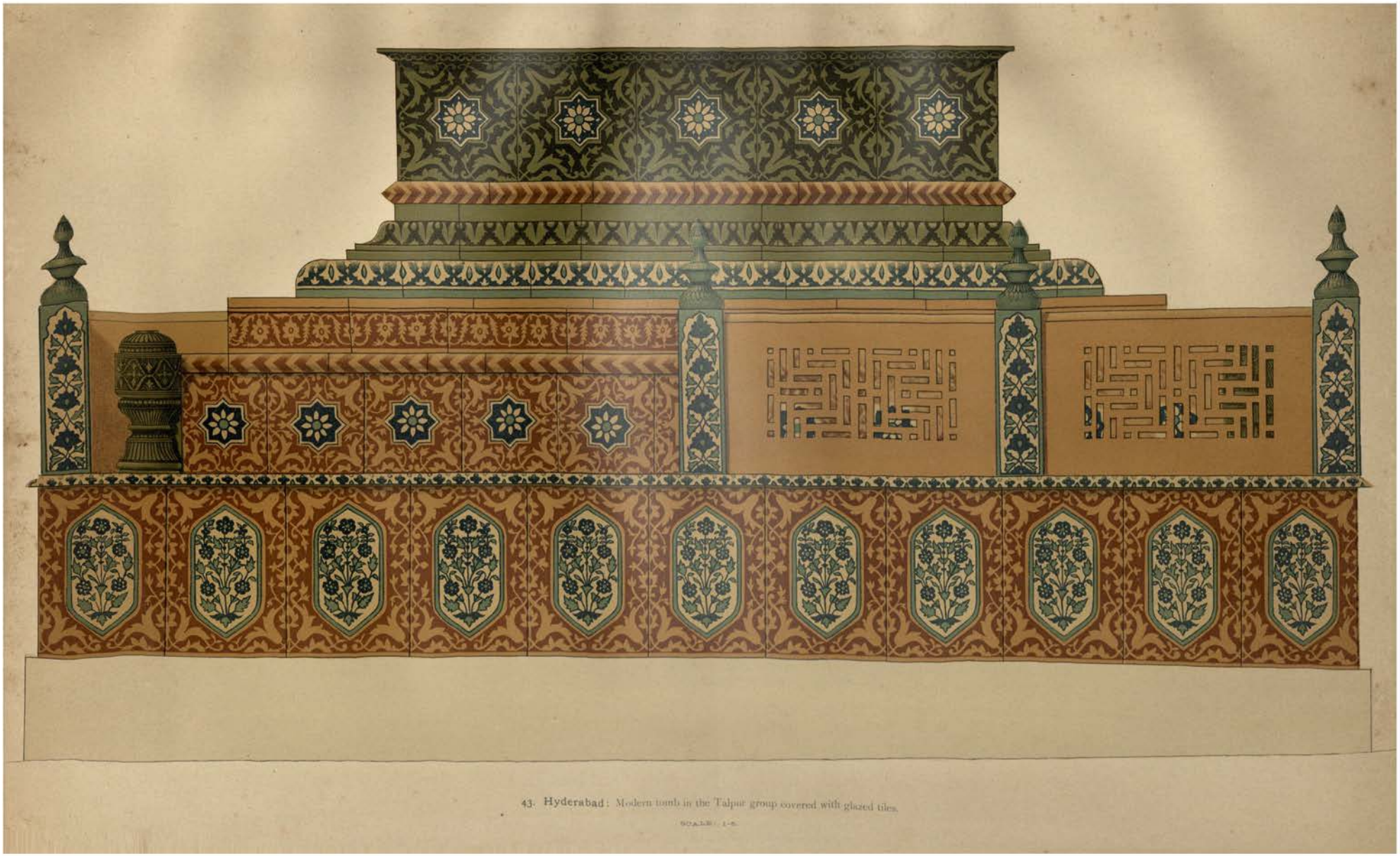
41. **Hyderabad**: Portions of coloured tile bands from the Talpur Tombs.

SCALE: 1-4



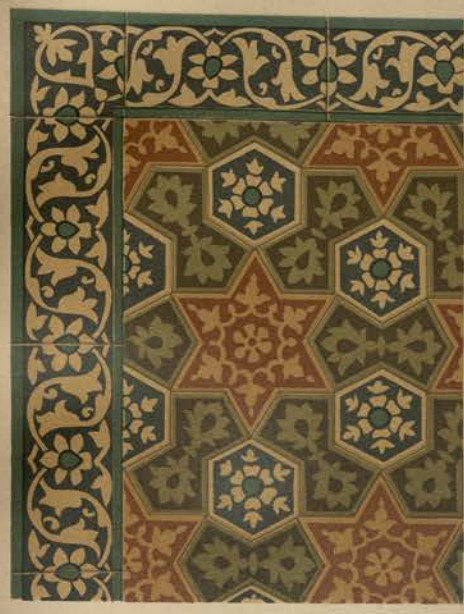
42. **Sehwan :** Coloured tile bands from the tomb of Lal Shahbaz.

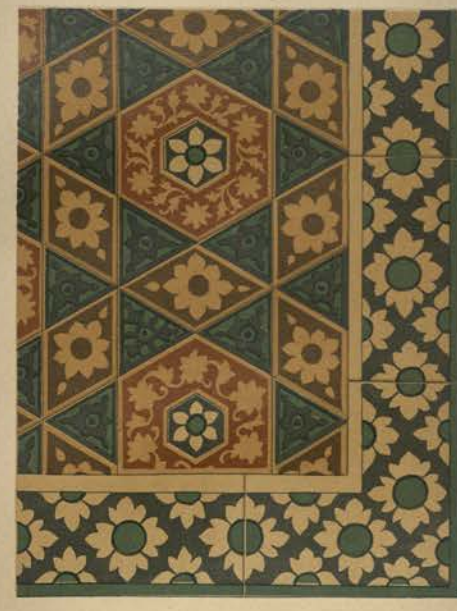
SCALE: 3-20.



43. **Hyderabad**: Modern tomb in the Talpur group covered with glazed tiles.

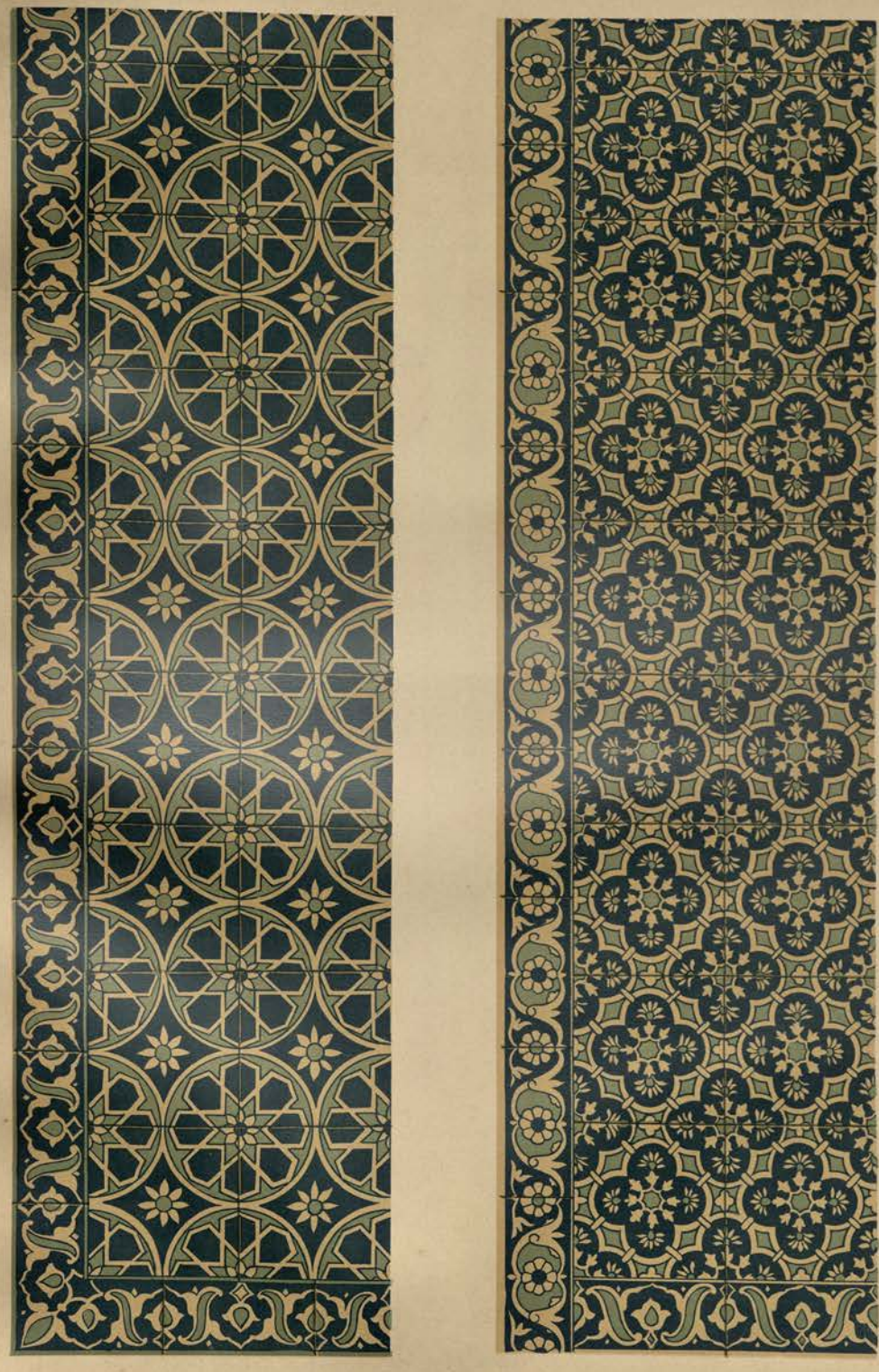
SCALE: 1-6.





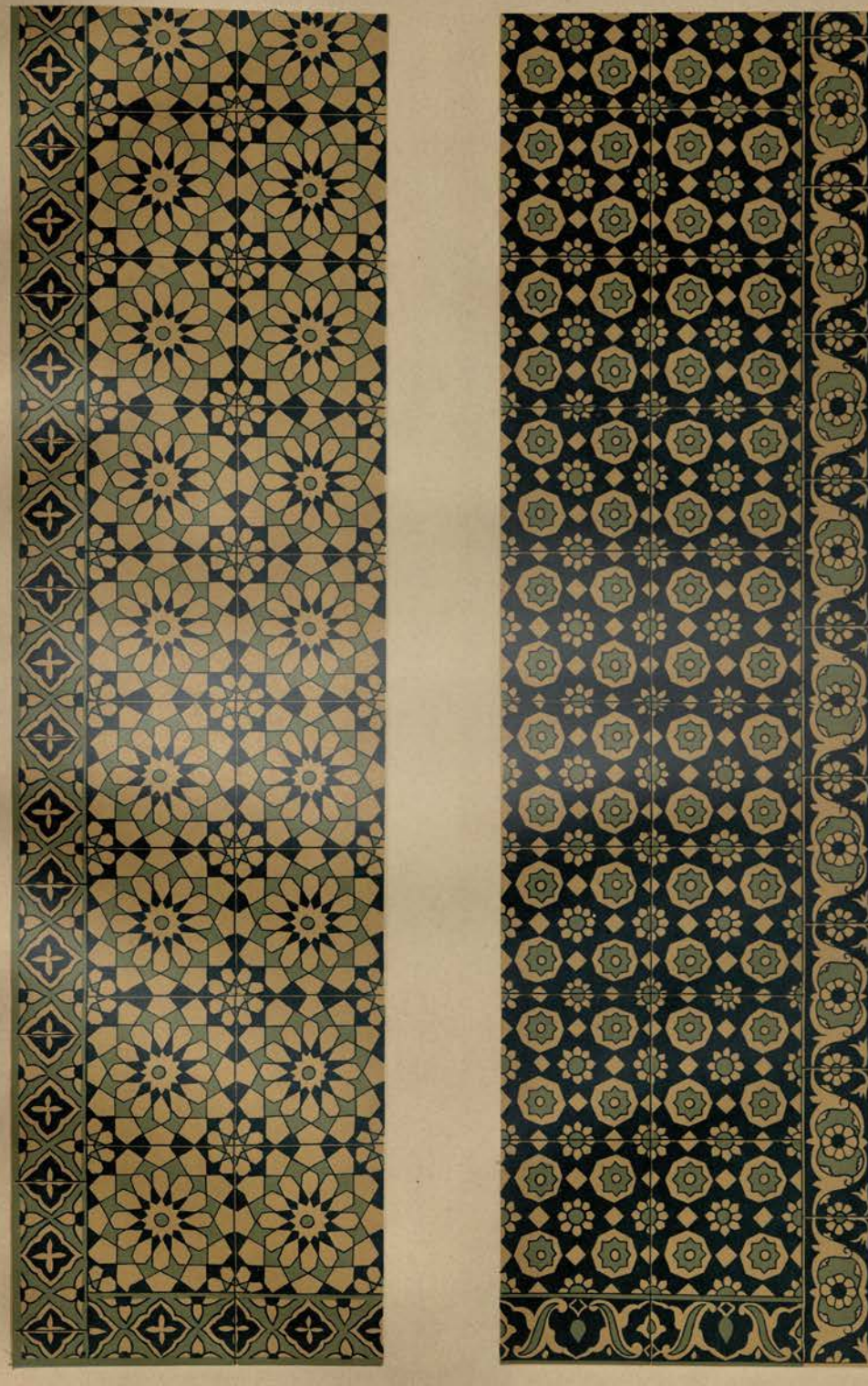
44. Hyderabad: Coloured tile work from the Talpur Tombs.

SCALE: 3-0.



45. **Hyderabad**: Coloured tile work from Ghulam Nabi Khan's Tomb.

SCALE: 1-4



46. **Hyderabad:** Coloured tile work from Ghulam Nabi Khan's Tomb.

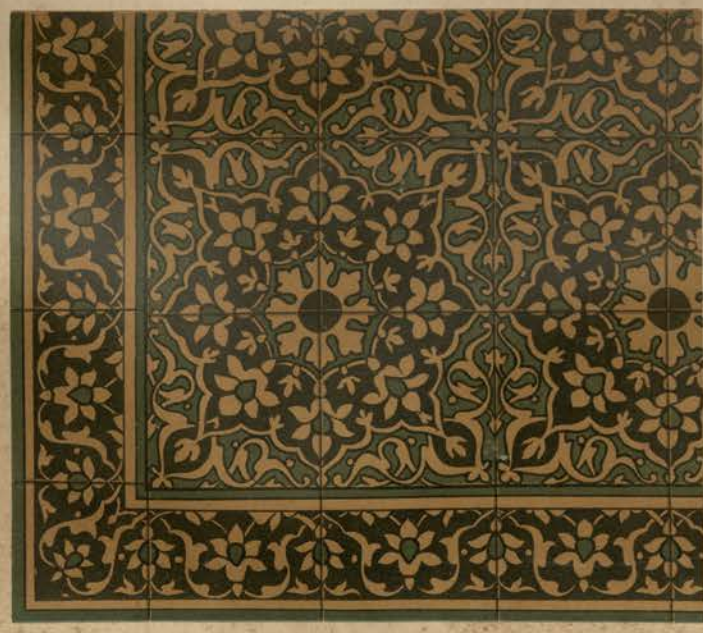
SCALE: 1-4.

47. **Hyderabad:** Coloured tile work from the Talpur Tombs.

SCALE: 1-4

48. **Hyderabad:** Coloured tile work from the Talpur Tombs.

SCALE: 1-4



49. **Hyderabad**: Coloured tile work from the Talpur Tombs.

SCALE: 1-4

50. **Hyderabad:** Coloured tile work from the Talpur Tombs.

SCALE: 1-4

00138918

Digitized with financial assistance from
Observer Research Foundation
on 17 May, 2019